

April 15, 2020

To the Graduate Program:

This project, entitled “Integrating collaborative learning activities to promote active learning for adult ESL learners” and written by Roxana Aguilar Delgado, is presented to the Graduate Program of Greensboro College. I recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts with a Major in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages.

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INTEGRATING COLLABORATIVE LEARNING ACTIVITIES  
TO PROMOTE ACTIVE LEARNING FOR  
ADULT ESL LEARNERS

Presented to  
the Graduated Program  
of  
Greensboro College

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts in  
Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages

by  
Roxana Aguilar Delgado

April 2020

Advisor: Paula M. Wilder

## **Abstract**

The world has become more connected with different cultures nowadays. This has caused an increase in the number of the diversity adults ESL learners present in the educational centers. The present paper is focused on how teachers can integrate collaborative learning activities to promote active learning in the adult ESL learners. It explains how important the collaborative work in the school system is. It explains how the practice of collaborative work can provide a tremendous change in the adult ESL learners. Additionally, it provides an overview of how the teachers can learn about the collaborative work and create strategies that help them to give all the tools the adult ESL learners need. It proposes a series of workshops for teachers that include concepts and strategies that can be implemented to apply the collaborative work in their lesson plans. Teachers can participate in practical activities to learn about the theory and ask questions about it. The expectation is that they can implement this information with their actual and future adult ESL learners.

## **Dedication**

This thesis is dedicated primarily to God for guiding me in every moment of my life. Then, I would like to thank my parents because they have always given me unconditional support. Also, I would like to thank my sister Laura because she has always been my example to follow and she shows me day by day that with effort and patience wonderful things can be achieved.

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank Dr. Michelle Plaisance for the support she has given me since I started with my master. Also, I would like to thank Paula Wilder, my advisor, for her guidance and support throughout my TESOL Adult learners' class and the thesis writing process and to all the teachers who were part of my education during this major.

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## **Chapter One: Introduction**

Jimenez (2008) found that “Education is a primary tool for change to favor society, as it determines the opportunity for the development of citizenship and is also called to raise the level and quality of life of the population through changes that seek understanding of collaboration as a social variable for development” (p. 95). After taking the course TESOL Adult Learners, the words “Adult Learners” were used in every articles or chapter I read. After analyzing the way, I learned about adults and the process they go through to assimilate to learn a new language, I realized how lucky I am and how writing and reading are essential to every human being, but sometimes it is not easy for all people. As a Hispanic, I want to find a way to contribute and help adult learners in the United States with through this thesis. I researched the strengths and weaknesses of adult learners and how we can integrate and support adult learners.

The Quality Education Center as an Axis of Costa Rican Education (2008) noted that “quality education is one that meets the needs and social aspirations in general, from the respect and attention to the diversity of the student body, providing opportunities to learn throughout life” (p. 11). Therefore, the government and various non-profit organizations have worked to ensure that they provide a better education to everyone. The purpose of my project is to offer some help to adult learners in Virginia.

After all I learned during TESOL adult learners, my goal is with collaborative work and the motivation and curiosity to find good ways to help our adult learners to integrate them in the classrooms in the United States. According to Delgado (2017), "collaborative work is a group of three or more people who interact in a dynamic and interdependent manner for a goal and



objectives, where each acquires some specific responsibilities or functions" (p. 1). The background evidence shows that using strategies that allow teachers to work collaboratively with the educational community to obtain better results in all areas, and some of them showed how collaborative learning promotes attention to diversity in the educational center.

Another tool used in a collaborative classroom is inclusion. It is impossible to talk about inclusion without thinking about diversity. This term refers to the difference or distinction between persons, animals or things, to variety. Inclusion shows a safe path to change, to the opening of new educational systems that allow the entrance and attention of the student to the educational centers for diversity. Inclusive education has all the expressions of diversity in its classrooms. The educational centers expose the variety present in society, and that in most cases can represent the lowest percentage of the population or that due to their physical, socioeconomic, gender, cultural, and even their capabilities have been excluded. Melendez (2002) indicated that diversity refers to "natural, supportive and productive competition efficiently human differences, arising from the order of the personal and cultural" (p. 9).

Traditionally, schools have focused their efforts on ensuring academic performance and meeting the most various educational needs by designing unique programs for those who have fallen behind due to their learning or behavioral difficulties and have forgotten that working collaboratively. The diversity presented in the educational community can be satisfactory. An approach that prioritizes attention to diversity has to involve the school as a whole. It is the educational centers that, from their own institutional culture, assume the responsibility that the change implemented in each of their spaces and of course, to provide the best options for adults because it is necessary to understand that they have responsibilities at home and work.

Working together for a final goal, which in this case is the attention to the diversity of the

educational center, involves being willing to live an individual experience of knowledge that allows you to make a construction or reconstruction of learning that will benefit the entire scholarly community. Collaboration involves interaction among all members and confidence that there is a commitment to the student. It is essential to consider that each person who decides to study needs the support of the community and the motivation of the teachers.

For Jiménez (2008), one of the basic objectives pursued with the use of collaborative work is to promote adequate training and proper work performance from the exchange of ideas and actions of the members involved in the management process of the organization, including the promotion of ideas, training activities, and action proposals (p. 96). Based on the ideas presented in the previous lines, it determined that collaborative work is the most useful tool for the construction process of an educational center that meets all the fundamental characteristics for the attention of diversity. Instead, the main actor of the generation of change is the teacher who must learn to create new strategies that they favor the whole student person, but not alone, but with the collaboration of the entire educational community.

All the efforts that are made at a global and national level regarding attention to diversity in schools or organizations contribute to the recognition that differences positively affect the growth of society. However, this awareness concerns not only adult learners but the teaching person who is responsible for the daily training of the full range of characteristics. According to Arnáiz et al. (1999), "When in a center the faculty or a group of professors consider diversity as a positive thing in their classrooms as a reason to reflect and learn together, the climate that generated may pass through moments of reflection-action that translate in action principles to look for answers for every one of the students in the classroom (p. 29).

Despite these affirmations, for many years, teaching has been overshadowed by practices

of teachers who, for lack of knowledge, fears, or little interest in the subject, feel unable to pay attention to particularities. It is these practices that we wish to abandon and give way to the creation of educational centers where diversity is respected, and opportunities offered to all the adult learners of the community that wants to learn a new language to follow their goals.

These advantages have raised the number of experiences teachers face and the challenge of training people that come to the United States and teach them English. Some of the public schools offer the option for parents that want to learn English and some non-profit organization that support the adult learners in the community and offer resources that help them to learn and practice at home or in any other space that they can use to practice the language.

It is from the need to improve attention to diversity from the educational community itself, which is considered of utmost importance, to initiate an awareness process that serves to support the teachers or organizations that want to work with adults and provide them a good education in the United States. That will help to understand that working together can improve the quality of attention to adult learners, but even more so, work in an educational center that cares about each of its members and promotes spaces that help adult learners to learn. It is necessary that the teacher reflect and become aware of the leading role he/she has in the lives of the adults and that this influence can affect the success they have.

## **Chapter Two: Literature Review**

### **Collaborative Work**

Collaborative work in educational centers is one of the tools that allows us to analyze educational practices based on all the learning factors. If we want to use collaborative work, it must be carried out properly and develop construction strategies where the most important are methodological strategies that validate the importance of the application of collaborative work between teachers and students in educational centers. According to Delgado (2017)

"collaborative work is a group of three or more people who interact dynamically and interdependently with respect to a goal and objectives, where each individual acquires some specific responsibilities or functions" (p. 1). In addition, Delgado (2017) added that the "collaborative work is a teaching-learning strategy in which small work groups are organized in which each member has common objectives that have been previously established and on which the work will be carried out" (p. 1). It is necessary to create a group of work that will seek to achieve the goals that are in common that includes teachers and adult learners.

In addition, Hernandez (2007) added that "the group must generate knowledge reconstruction processes, this refers to the fact that everyone learns more than they would learn on their own, since an interaction of the team members is manifested (p. 9). When adult learners work together, even if they do not know each other, that means that they want to motivate one another to find the same goal of learning a new language.

According to Hernandez (2007) “The members of each group will be able to recognize their abilities and in the same way their differences, for which reason communication must be created, listening to and attending to everyone’s point of view” (p. 9).

According to Hernández (2007) “the communicative act is conceived as processes that, on these, depend on interaction and meanings and are those that promote awareness and decisions independently” (p. 12). Additionally, Hernandez (2007) added that “people are not the same after participating fully in communication processes and that by interacting, new perspectives and strategies are created that favor collaboration” (p. 12).

González’s report (2003) (as cited in Delgado, 2017) indicated that the characteristics of collaborative groups are the following:

- Leadership is a shared responsibility; the team has a specific and well-defined purpose.
- The product of the work is both the team and the member.
- Effectiveness is evaluated by directly evaluating the team's products. Individual and team responsibility are evident.
- Individual efforts that contribute to the success of the team are recognized, celebrated, and open discussions are held for the effective solution of problems. (p. 2).

From the business point of view, many organizations have used collaborative work as a tool that facilitates the work of its members and empowers itself with the use of technology. Currently, we have been using the technology to communicate with our students and encourage them to practice with apps that connect them with the new language.

Gómez (2017) defined collaborative work as "a way to generate synergies and take advantage of the benefits of the group in favor of learning and activity" (p. 1). Furthermore, Gómez (2017) added that “collaborative work within an organization implies the achievement of

common objectives, and the sharing of work carried out using internal technological tools that allow and favor the transfer of knowledge. It is a work modality that offers important advantages since it facilitates the development of projects in a more agile and efficient way, taking full advantage of the collective knowledge” (p. 1). Greater efficiency, greater flexibility, better use and greater capacity for innovation; these are just some of the benefits that come to an organization from the implementation of the collaborative work. Moreover, Gómez (2017) stated that “Collaborative work is about understanding that the community or group is more productive than the sum of individuality and that this requires commitment and a collaborative mindset, therefore, collaborators must be willing to participate actively, voluntarily and with the ability to value the work done” (p. 1). It can be defined then that collaborative work is in which people unite with a common goal that allows them to achieve certain objectives that would not be possible if they did it individually.

### **Collaborative Work and Cooperative Work**

According to Woolfolk (2010), “collaborative work is the philosophy about how to relate to others: how to learn and work with them” and cooperative work defines it as “way of working with others to achieve a goal” (p. 323). In addition, Woolfolk (2010) mentions that many companies “are looking for employees who, not only master a specific set of academic skills, but also have the ability to work in harmony with a wide variety of colleagues in cooperative teams, to demonstrate initiative and responsibility, and to communicate effectively” (p. 323). Moreover, Woolfolk (2010) mentioned that “the schools and non-profit organizations are looking for teachers that want to help students like the adult learners that really wants to learn a new language, and of course the ideal of this purpose is to have a team of teachers that work together

and teachers who have the qualities” (p. 323).

Calder (1992) mentioned that “situational barriers arise from an individual’s life situation; the fact that work or home responsibilities may leave little time for study, that courses may cost too much money, that child care arrangements may not be available, or that transport may be a constraint” (p. 11). Likewise, Delgado (2017) indicated that:

...the difference lies in the fact that in collaborative work the participants are the ones who design their interaction structure and maintain control over the different decisions that affect their knowledge, in cooperative work they are the leader who designs and maintains control over the structure and dynamics of interactions, in addition to the results. (p. 2).

Additionally, Woolfolk (2010) added that:

...collaboration is a way of relating to people who respect differences and who share authority; it is based on knowledge that is distributed among other individuals.

Cooperation, on the other hand, is the way of working with others to achieve a common goal” (p. 323). Furthermore, Woolfolk (2010) concluded that “cooperative work is a form of collaboration. (p. 323).

### **Collaborative Work, a Tool for Attention to Diversity**

According to the Ministry of Public Education of Costa Rica (2018), is understood as a form of organization of the educational community in which work teams are formed to articulate actions, strategies, procedures and methodologies, in order to achieve common and agreed

objectives, make decisions, share responsibilities and contribute knowledge, practices and values from the different knowledge of each person. All this for the continuous improvement of the educational process (p. 235).

In addition, Ramos' report (2012 as cited in the Dictionary of the Royal Academy of the Spanish Language, 2001) defined diversity as: "Variety, dissimilarity, difference" (p. 15). In addition, Abagnano (1983) wrote that diversity is: "All otherness, difference or dissimilarity" (p. 351). Based on the previous definition, collaborative work, within the educational community, and with attention to diversity, requires a greater effort on the part of all its members since it implies a change. Ainscow et al. (2001) mentioned that "this process can alter their ways of thinking and doing so that most people can resist or only launch into implementation, and this leads to the feeling of anxiety and feelings of incompetence very often associated with relearning and significant change" (p. 13). Furthermore, Ainscow et al. (2001) added that this "phase of dissonance, of internal turbulence, is as predictable as it is uncomfortable, so that conditions must be created within the same educational communities that ensure support for individuals through this process that is inevitable" (p. 13). Besides, Ainscow and others (2001) according to their research, indicate that some of the conditions that improve the school are: collaborative planning, training permanent and professional development of teachers, research and reflection and participation of students (p. 14).

Furthermore, in order for the education to properly respect the diversity requires, according to Hopkins et al. (1996)

...commitment (willingness to help everyone), affection (enthusiasm and affection towards everyone), knowledge of the didactics of the subject taught (make it accessible to all), multiple teaching models (flexibility and ability to resolve the unforeseen), reflection



on practice and teamwork that promote learning among colleagues” (p. 168).

Likewise, Hopkins et al. (1996) emphasized that teacher training must be permanent. The teachers themselves are responsible for their training, and collaborative work is a tool for teachers to act as researchers of their practice, reflecting among themselves and looking for ways of professional development (p. 168).

Therefore, collaborative work within an educational center that wishes to become an inclusive school, must develop a sense of community and mutual support that strives for the success of all members of the school: teachers and students. This implies modifications at the level of didactic approach and identity construction as a center that favors the feeling of belonging where everyone feels accepted, equal, and supported by each other.

### **Collaborative Work as a Change Strategy**

Jiménez (2009) indicated that collaborative work is:

An appropriate response to break the old rigid and bureaucratic paradigms since it includes systems that promote the management of human talent and that recognize that change is inherent in the person and a reflection of those who are part of the organization” (p. 99).

Considering this approach and the need that the teacher presents when lacking the tools to face the change, it is considered important to make a proposal that allows students to be trained from a social and not an individualistic model.

Caldeiro et al. (2009 as cited in Jimenez, 2009) reported that:

The organization, in this case, the participants that are part of the educational center must know the characteristics of collaborative work, which are: harmonious integration of functions and activities carried out by different people, for its implementation, it is intended that the responsibilities are shared by its members also the activities carried out need to be carried out in a coordinated manner, planned team programs are required to target a common goal and last but not least Learning to work effectively as a team demands your time, since it is necessary to acquire special skills and abilities necessary for the harmonious performance of your work. (p. 10)

Jiménez (2009) also noted that, to achieve the establishment of collaborative work, several factors are required that will determine the success of the process:

- Cohesion: it refers to the attraction of being a member of a group. To promote cohesion, activities can be carried out that make it possible to know the characteristics of the participants and evaluate their own abilities, strengths and weaknesses.
- Assignment of roles and norms: it is positive that the participants discuss and agree on the roles and norms to guarantee their appropriation and active participation.
- Communication: use strategies that promote communication between participants where they can give, receive and listen to the information given to each of the members.

- The definition of objectives: it is very important that team members have common objectives related to the team's work and that each one can explain what their individual objectives are.
- Positive interdependence: Collaborative learning is characterized by positive interdependence between the people participating in a team, who are responsible for their own learning and for the team's learning in general (p. 100-102).

## **Conclusion**

This research aims to respond to the need of the student population, so the above aspects will be used to build strategies to improve collaborative work for adequate attention to diversity. It is important to take into consideration that "collaborative work is a group of three or more people who interact dynamically and interdependently with respect to goals and objectives where each individual acquires some specific responsibilities or functions" (Delgado, 2017, p. 1). In this manner the teacher professional development signifies a role of importance in the learning process of the adult ESL learners. Consequently, the teachers themselves are responsible for their training, and collaborative work is a tool for teachers to act as researchers of their practice, reflecting among themselves and looking for ways of professional development (Hopkins et al., 1996, p. 168), which is why educators need the right training in order to implement strategies that promote collaborative work between teachers and adult ESL students.

### **Chapter Three: Project Design**

In this chapter, I explain the objective of implementing strategies that promote collaborative work between teachers and adult ESL students who come from Latin American countries to improve attention to diversity in order to learn the English language in educational centers in the United States. The research in this chapter has a qualitative approach since its object is the development of concepts that help to understand social phenomena in natural environments, giving the necessary importance to the intentions, experiences, and opinions of all the participants. According to González (2003), the qualitative approach is in charge of "studying phenomena of a social nature, trying to understand the surrounding reality in its specific character" (p. 130). That means that this approach will provide a variety of data and information through interviews, personal experience, life stories, routines, and collaborative work strategies. Likewise, Colmenares (2008) referred to a "way of studying, exploring, a social situation in order to improve it, in which the involved in the investigated reality" (p. 104). Similarly, Zapata (2005) indicated that "the fundamental goal of this type of research is to improve the reality in which the research participants live, work or socially act. In addition, Zapata (2005) added that "it is a form of self-reflective inquiry, in order to improve the reality of their practices and their understanding" (p. 175).

In addition, it is necessary for the participants to carry out an analysis of the problem with a view to possible solutions. It will be possible to determine a series of strategies to follow that allow, through collaborative work, to establish actions to improve attention to adults who come from Latin American countries that begin their process of learning the English language in the

United States. For this reason, this project aims to meet one of the needs of adults learning English in a new country without any prior knowledge and to motivate teachers to participate in workshops that help them to understand how to create their lessons plans based on the necessities of the adult ESL learners.

The final product of my project will be a workshop that is going to be a useful tool to share experiences with those directly involved at different levels of learning. The idea of the workshop is given to teachers so that they can better implement the collaborative work strategy when planning a lesson for adult ESL learners. The workshop will be called "Collaboration: A Step Towards Change." The workshop will take approximately six hours that and is divided into two sessions using a professional workday for teachers and administrative staff in a middle school in Virginia. The target group are teachers that range in age from 25 to 50 years old. The reason for this research is because the educational center wants to improve the inclusion of adults in the educational system in the United States, and all together, the teachers and the administrative staff will be ones who generate a change in the community. Currently, the institution runs a program called 21st Century Program, and it supports the adult ESL learners. The current program has 15 adult learners in Level 1 and eight adult learners in Level 2.

As a result, it is expected that all teachers, administrative staff, and adult ESL learners will benefit from this workshop because it allows the inclusion of collaborative work in which the main idea is that adults achieve their goal of learning English in the United States.

## Chapter Four: Project

The objective of implementing strategies that promotes collaborative work between teachers and adult students who come from Latin American countries to improve attention to diversity in order to learn the English language in educational centers in the United States.

**Table 1**

**1 General Work Plan**

Specific objective	Actions	Proposed timetable
Know the importance of collaborative work as a strategy for the attention of diversity.	1. Training of the participants through a master presentation in: 1.1 Conceptualization of collaborative work. 1.2 Importance of collaborative work for the attention of diversity. 1.3 Factors that determine the success of collaborative work. Evaluation and reflection	1 Hour
Use different collaborative work strategies as a tool to improve the determining factors for the success of its application in the educational center.	2. In subgroups, through different strategies, the following task will be carried out: 2.1 Reflection and analysis on the factors that impede, in the educational center, the cohesion between the teachers and the administration. 2.2 Reflection and analysis on the factors that prevent, in the educational	

	<p>center, the assignment of roles and norms between teachers and administration.</p> <p>2.3 Reflection and analysis on the factors that prevent communication between teachers and administration in the educational center.</p> <p>2.4 Reflection and analysis on the factors that prevent, in the educational center, the definition of objectives between the teachers and the administration.</p> <p>2.5 Reflection and analysis of the factors that prevent, in the educational center, the positive interdependence between the teachers and the administration.</p> <p>2.6 Discussion among all the participants about the factors exposed in the previous points.</p>	
Propose strategies that promote collaborative work to address diversity.	<p>3. Based on the analysis carried out in the previous session, the group should propose an action plan that encourages collaborative work to address diversity. The plan will be presented according to each work session in tables 2 and 3.</p>	2 Hours

**Table 2****2 Session Plan #1 (morning)**

Specific Objective	Strategies to be performed	Time required
	Welcome of the participants	10 min
Know the importance of collaborative work as a strategy for the attention of diversity.	2. Cohesion activity: 2.1 The cohesion of the group is fostered with a presentation activity called “Hats to play” (Appendix 1).	20 min
	3. Training of the participants through a master presentation in: Conceptualization of collaborative work. Importance of collaborative work for the attention of diversity. Factors that determine the success of collaborative work.	40 min
	4. Evaluation and reflection 4.1 Through a discussion, the ideas and conclusions of the participants will be presented from the keynote presentation and the objective to be achieved. 4.2 Participants will self-assess their participation in collaborative work (Appendix 2). 4.3 The coordinator will take note of the ideas and conclusions, if possible, this section of the day will be recorded.	20 min



Break 10 min		
	<p>5. Role assignment and communication activity.</p> <p>5.1 The assignment of roles and communication of the group is encouraged with participation in the activity: The Foundation (Appendix 3).</p>	20 min
Use different collaborative work strategies as a tool to improve the determining factors for the success of its application in the educational center.	<p>6. The group will be divided into three subgroups. Each of them will analyze the information presented on the aspects: Cohesion, assignment of roles and communication within the educational organization (Appendix 4, 5 and 6)</p> <p>7. Each of the subgroups will reflect and analyze what the factors are that prevent or facilitate the practice of these aspects.</p>	60 min

**Table 3***3 Session Plan #2 (Afternoon)*

Specific Objective	Strategies to be performed	Time required
	1. Welcome of the participants	10 min
Use different collaborative work strategies as a tool to improve the determining factors for the success of its application in the educational center.	2. Objective definition activity: 2.1 The definition of group affirmation is promoted with an activity called “My tree” (Appendix 7).	15 min
	3. Conference on the definition and importance of planning clear objectives for attention to diversity and positive interdependence	40 min
	4. Evaluation and reflection 4.1 Through a discussion, the ideas and conclusions of the participants will be presented based on the keynote presentation and the objective to be achieved. 4.2 Participants will analyze possible objectives to be addressed collaboratively (Appendix 8). 4.3 The coordinator will take note of the ideas and conclusions, if possible, this section of the day will be recorded.	10 min.
Break 10 min		
Propose strategies that promote collaborative work to address diversity.	5. The group is subdivided into teams to prepare a planning proposal that shows the collaborative work for attention to diversity (Appendix 9).	min

	6. As a discussion each team presents the work. The relevance and feasibility of each of the approaches is assessed. Recommendations and suggestions for possible application.	30 min
	7. Evaluation of the workshop by the participants (Appendix 10).	5 min

### **Analysis of the Information**

Buendía, Colás and Hernández (1998) indicated that qualitative data analysis “(...) is not a precise or temporarily determined stage in a specific phase of research (...) it operates in cycles, it takes place throughout the investigation process is concurrent with the data collection and works with the data exhaustively” (p. 289).

To carry out the research, the criteria presented by Buendía et al (1998) and Rodríguez et al (1996) will be taken:

- a. the discovery of units of analysis: involves reducing the breadth of the data to manageable dimensions, the selection of them requires their initial coding.

This first criterion is reflected in the researcher's observation and experience to determine what needs are being presented and its priority, which is to provide information to teachers and administrative staff on the need for inclusion towards the diversity of adults who come to the United States with the need to learn the language and to be able to help their children in their studies.

- b. Categorization: it is the grouping and ordering of the data in categories or concepts, which starts from the reading of these on the contents and topics they contain, which leads inductively to the delimitation of the categories.

The educational centers and non-profit organization receive, every year, at least fifteen people each quarter who want to learn the language and who do not have the necessary tools for learning, and for this reason this work is carried out so that through monitoring plans raised in this research, it is possible to define a professional teacher's day to develop it.

- c. Data provision: refers to the presentation of information in an organized, comprehensive and operational way that facilitates drawing conclusions from it.

Once the categories are defined, the collaborators will have a very important participation since they will provide real information on the needs that arise when adults from other countries come to the United States to learn a new language. Based on this information, the data and the action plan to be executed will be described.

- d. Formulation of hypotheses and / or establishment of educated guesses (elaboration of the theory): it implies establishing relationships or connections to be explored between the data, through constant comparison that leads to the integration of a theory.

Once the work plan has been executed, the researcher will establish the hypotheses involved in discovering, through a theory review, what data can reveal the information obtained to propose clear actions that facilitate attention to diversity in the educational center.

and. Obtaining and verifying conclusions includes obtaining results and conclusions and verifying conclusions.

Obtaining hypotheses about what could improve the attention to diversity and the inclusion of Adults in educational centers, helps the researcher to reach conclusions based on the work carried out by the participants and to be able to offer recommendations that benefit the strategies that can apply teachers to improve their work.

## **Analysis of Results**

This section presents the analysis of the data that have been ordered and grouped according to the information provided by the participants as a result of the methodological proposal proposed in this work. The information was collected after the sessions held during the teacher's professional day, where the study participants shared their criteria and opinions in the Workshop "Collaboration one step towards change".

These data were analyzed and interpreted by the researcher to respond to the problem posed in accordance with the research objectives. In order to better understand the analysis carried out, two major categories of analysis were elaborated with their respective subcategories that allow further study of the subject.

### **Analysis Unit I: Collaborative Work**

This unit of analysis allows to identify the perception and conceptualization of the participants about teamwork and their relationship with the educational center where they work in order to analyze the tasks to be carried out to develop a collaborative work proposal between teachers that allows improving attention to the diversity and inclusion of Adults.

#### **Category 1: Conceptualization of collaborative work**

This category refers to the perception that Collaborative Work participants have within an educational organization in order to achieve the unification of criteria among all members. The participants of the workshop shared their experiences and personal definitions of Collaborative

Work, commenting that for it to develop properly, all members of the group must be willing to help each other and put their skills, knowledge and abilities at the service of their team.

The participants, from their respective functions, defined collaborative work as:

- "Collaborative work is one where a group of people carry out various activities sharing ideas, knowledge, materials, skills, and others in order to achieve a common goal."  
(Team 2)
- "The work that can be done together with one or more other people in order to achieve a final objective, enriching all the areas that we can enrich from each person." (Team 3)

These conceptualizations are consistent with the ideas raised in the theory that indicate that collaborative work involves a group of people who interact dynamically to achieve common goals (Delgado, 2017).

Participants agree that Collaborative Work is a group of people who want to achieve a common goal, but for it to be carried out they must share their skills, ideas and experiences, which will be of great help to enrich all the members and favor the task you want to carry out.

For these reasons, it can be considered that, as there is clarity in the concept of Collaborative Work, the participants will better understand the importance of this in the process of attention to diversity and inclusion, therefore, it will facilitate the performance of activities that require sharing, plan and execute proposals towards this end.

## **Category 2: Opportunities and threats of collaborative work in the educational center.**

This category refers to the conclusions reached by the participants when evaluating aspects that facilitate or hinder collaborative work between teachers of the non-profit

organization or the institutions that provide the service of teaching English to adults.

According to the experience lived by the teachers and administrative personnel in the workshop, they considered that the cohesion between the teachers are two of the most important aspects for working collaboratively. They mention:

- “In order for cohesion to be achieved among all of us who work here, we need teamwork and accept each other's ideas.” (Team 1)
- "We have to be responsible and have mutual commitment." (Team 2)
- "It seems to me that you have to form work teams where there is empathy." (Team 3)

Cohesion allows attraction between the members of a group (Jiménez, 2009) from personal knowledge to the commitments that can be assumed within a work group to achieve a common goal, which, agrees with what the participants expressed regarding to that there must be a sense of belonging that allows building trust among the members, but mainly the commitment and dedication in the functions that they must perform.

Based on the participation of teachers, it could be assumed that educational centers or non-profit organizations require strategies that allow the formation of work teams committed to their institution and their colleagues.

Communication is described as an adequate process before the people who make up the team and other agents of the educational community. The participants added that this “communication” factor has positive aspects such as:

- "I believe that electronic mail is one of the best means of communication between the administration and the teaching staff." (Team 1)

- "There are competent personnel in the advisory team who are always willing to attend to any type of query that may be had, and at times when they are necessary, they give the required support." (Team 2)

This aspect was discussed extensively in the workshop because the participants considered that it directly influences the proper functioning of the center and favors the formation of varied work teams, which is consistent with the theory presented by Hernández (2007) where it indicates that when the People actively participate in communication processes, new collaborative experiences are created.

This suggests that, by establishing possibilities for interaction between members, there is a greater contribution and enrichment of the educational community. It could be concluded that, by accepting the particularity of the community, the experiences, the formation and the mental structures through the interaction that promotes communication, the attention to the diversity and inclusion of adults would be benefited to have a better process.

Taking into account that the teachers and administrative staff are clear about the objective that is to provide adults with all the tools so that learning a new language in a country with different cultures is facilitated and they achieve their goals.

Giving, receiving and listening to the information given to each of the members (Jiménez, 2009) are factors that favor healthy communication between the members of an organization, and therefore, collaborative work.

## **Analysis Unit II: Collaborative Work, a Tool for Attention to Diversity**

This unit of analysis contains the definition of diversity of the participants, the relationship of collaborative work as a tool to address diversity and the strategies proposed for



this purpose.

### **Category 1: Conceptualization of diversity**

This category refers to the participants' perception of the concept of diversity. The participants commented that diversity is a very broad term in which it is necessary to clarify what is the approach from where you want to approach to avoid confusion.

From the point of view of the diversity that can occur in an educational community, the participants defined it as:

- "The interaction of different cultures, languages, nationalities, disabilities etc, in an environment." (Team 2)
- "The wealth that gives us the difference teaches us that not everything is the same, and that is the beauty, each one has his point, his light, his taste, preference and need, which projects us to be better for everyone. (Team 3)

Diversity is defined by Ramos (2012) as variety, difference and dissimilarity; terms mentioned by the participants when unifying criteria on the subject. From the analysis carried out, it can be inferred that this group values diversity as an aspect that favors improving its projection in the community. It could be said that diversity and its attention give an added value so there is an opening to have institutions or organizations that are more inclusive.

### **Category 2: Collaborative work as a tool for attention to diversity**

This category describes the participants' perception of the use of collaborative work as a tool to improve attention to diversity.

When asking the teachers if they considered that collaborative work improves attention to

diversity, they agreed that it is indeed a very good tool for working in such a large institution.

They mentioned that:

- "Support and collaboration are provided in areas that perhaps are the strongest for a partner." (Team 2)
- "If we carry out collaborative work, we will give adequate attention to students who have some kind of individual difference." (Team 2)
- "If we all support each other we can create better strategies for attending to diversity." (Team 3)

Participants approached collaborative work as a possibility to improve relationships between all, in addition to the enrichment of pedagogical and administrative strategies for attention to diversity through this tool. Arnáiz et al. (1999) mentioned that when in a school the group of teachers consider diversity as something positive, which generates reflection and learning, it can become a work team that seeks answers for each and every one of its members, for what can be compared the teachers' perception of collaborative work as that factor that generates reflection and learning and leads to the construction of inclusive good practices.

### **Category 3: Proposed objectives to address attention to diversity from collaborative work between teachers.**

This category presents the analysis carried out by the teachers in the workshop, capturing common short-term goals that can improve attention to diversity.

From the construction of meanings and understanding of the importance of collaborative work for attention to diversity, the participants created objectives that they consider beneficial for the process of change that the institution may have. In this regard they mentioned:

- “Develop various strategies in the classroom to strengthen the integration of adults and mutual progress.” (Team 1)
- “Establish weekly reading spaces and active participation in coordination with a reading promotion plan to put values into practice.” (Team 2)
- “Sensitize the educational community to the concept of diversity to achieve tolerance and empathy.” (Team 3)
- "Train the community in the attention in the social and educational field to relate in an assertive way." (Team 2)

Participants agree that current education should foster reflective and inclusive learning, where everyone feels part of the educational community. But for this type of methodologies to be developed, there must be a process of teacher training that allows them to understand and learn about each of the challenges that are presented to them. This is how collaborative work allows the creation of training and feeding spaces for banks of information and data that become strategies for working in the classroom with adults who want to learn the English language upon arrival in the United States.

Jiménez (2009) made a list of characteristics of an educational center where its teachers are willing to work collaboratively. The author mentions aspects similar to those raised by the participants when indicating that it takes time to acquire skills and abilities to work collaboratively, but stresses that with commitment and coordination among its members, the common objective is achieved.

#### **Category 4: Balance of the implemented action prototype**

The fourth category describes the perception that the participants have of the application of the workshop “Collaboration, a step towards change” and its implementation within the institution.

According to the participants, the experience in the workshop helped them become aware of the importance of collaborative work in educational centers that seek to increase strategies that favor attention to diversity. By consulting what they learned from the workshop, the participants indicate that:

- “I learned that it is necessary for all teachers to raise awareness and apply collaborative work, so that we can support each other in different aspects, to pass the benefits on to the adults who are in our care.”
- "We must challenge all the changes that occur in the educational system having an ability to adapt to achieve common learning."
- "All people have positive characteristics or skills that we can share with others, so that together we can achieve different goals or objectives that we set for ourselves in our educational work."

Woolfolk (2010) named collaborative work as the philosophy of how to learn and work with other people. Participants agree with the author, highlighting that collaborative work involves learning from the other in order to support and work towards a common goal, which in this case are adult students who come to our classes with the sole objective of learning English.

These perceptions suggest that the participants understood the concept of collaborative work, but that they also consider it a working tool in educational work. It can be said that the

participation of this group in the particular workshop of teachers generated reflection on collaborative work, but mainly awareness of the importance of this for the adaptation of strategies that allow improving the approach to diversity and inclusion of adults to our educational system so that they can be provided with all the tools for their learning.

The teachers considered that the workshop was relevant in their educational work, but that they should seek more information and better prepare themselves to apply it in their daily work. Hopkins and Stern, (1996) emphasize that teacher training must be permanent and that training is the responsibility of the teachers themselves, so it could be said that what the participants suggest reflects the permanent need for research within the educational center where they work, collaborative work is seen as a great opportunity to strengthen the performance of teachers in classrooms with adults and expand professional development.

## **Chapter Five: Conclusions**

Once the research is completed, conclusions are included related to the implementation of a collaborative work strategy among teachers that favors attention to diversity and inclusion of adults in the educational system who want to learn a new language in the United States in order to communicate with others in the country and being able to help their children with schoolwork. Collaborative work is a group of people who want to achieve a common goal, but for it to be carried out they must share their skills, ideas and experiences, which will be of great help to enrich all members and promote the task to perform. All the participants understand the importance of collaborative work, and it will facilitate the carrying out of activities that require sharing, planning, and executing proposals to achieve the teacher's objective.

The educational center requires strategies that allow the formation of work teams committed to its institution and its colleagues, and it involves communication since it establishes possibilities for interaction between members of the educational center, and there is a greater contribution and enrichment of the educational community. In addition, collaboration involves accepting the particularity of the community, experiences, training, and mental structures through interaction, benefiting attention to diversity that it is seen as a positive aspect that favors institutions, giving an added value that improves the projection in the community and that benefits the construction of a more inclusive institution.

Participants consider collaborative work as a good tool from which benefits are obtained that improve, not only, attention to diversity through the enrichment of pedagogical and administrative strategies, but also the relationship between teachers because it became a place

where reflection and learning of inclusive good practices is practiced. Considering that the school wants to benefit dozens of adult ESL students, the attention to diversity through collaborative work increases the possibility of finding answers to adequately address the adult population.

Education must foster reflective and inclusive learning where everyone feels part of the educational community. However, for this type of methodology to be developed, there must be a process of teacher training that allows teachers to understand and to learn about each of the challenges that are presented to them. This is how collaborative work allows the creation of training and feeding spaces for banks of information and data that become strategies for working in the classroom with adults who want to learn English; also, the teachers require constant review and that priorities are established that respond to current demands and the population in their community.

Teachers consider that giving support among colleagues increases learning and that working for a common goal benefits the adult ESL learners as it can increase the variety of strategies that can be practiced in the classroom. The workshop brought teaching staff closer to the concept of diversity as a challenge that can be shared, reflected on, and improved strategies for its approach, but the participants are visualized using collaborative work since it is a great opportunity to strengthen the performance of teachers in classrooms and expand professional development.

## Appendices



## **Appendix A: Development of Work Sessions**

### **Session A1**

Cohesion Activity: Hats to Play

#### **Goals:**

1. Group integration
2. Coexistence
3. Creating a friendly environment
4. Knowledge and perception of the other.

#### **Materials:**

1. A very large trunk, suitcase, or bag.
2. Hats, head scarves. (large quantity and diversity of shapes, colors and materials)

#### **Development of the activity**

1. A large bag, trunk or suitcase containing a hat and scarves of different kinds is placed in the middle of the classroom.

2. The coordinator of the activity, previously pairs randomly.
3. Each participant chooses a hat or scarf and places it on their partner's head.
4. Then make a partner presentation explaining why you chose that hat or scarf for your partner.

IMPORTANT: In presentation, participants should always highlight positive qualities or values of their partner.

### Group reflection

The activity coordinator leads the group to reflect by asking the following questions:

1. What did you think of the game?
2. Could they get to know each other better? How did they do it?
3. Was it easy for you to express what each one is and what the group thinks of you?

### Session A2

Evaluation and reflection activity

Participants individually analyze and complete the following instrument.

Date:
<p>Considering the above, I can say that:</p> <p>Collaborative work is: _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>Do I use collaborative work as a strategy for my classes? (yes/no) Why?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>Do I practice collaborative work with classmates? (yes/no) Why?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>Do I practice collaborative work with classmates? (yes/no) Why?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>Is collaborative work a tool to improve attention to diversity? (yes/no) Why?</p>

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What do you think do we need to use collaborative work as a strategy to improve attention to diversity?

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### Session A3

Role assignment and communication activity: The Foundation

#### Goals:

1. Promote that each member identifies their capacities and qualities.
2. Provide the opportunity for people to recognize their values through communication.

#### Development

Sometimes people do not usually communicate their abilities and qualities, this is an exercise to help make them visible. To carry out the activity you must perform the following steps:

1. The coordinator communicates to the group that a new planet has been found and can be inhabited. All were selected to find the first country in that place, they will be transferred in five days.
2. Each member must choose the role they will have according to their abilities and qualities, for example: nurse, doctor, president, head of urban planning, etc. In addition to choosing the role, they must give a brief explanation of why.
3. In large round each person tells the rest of the group their role and why they chose it, no one should have an opinion on whether they consider it correct or not. If there are duplicate

roles, they must find a solution.

### **Group reflection**

The activity coordinator leads the group to reflect by asking the following questions:

1. Was it easy or difficult for you to find a role in the foundation? Why?
2. How does it feel to know the potential that you have and that you can integrate it with the potential of other people?

### **Session A4**

Subgroup worksheets: Cohesion

Instrument 4.1

Individually:

Make a list of the aspects that demonstrate that the teaching and administrative staff practice cohesion

Make a list of the aspects that you think the institution should have to achieve cohesion in your work team

## Instrument 4.2

## Cohesion

It refers to the attraction of being a member of a group. To promote cohesion, activities can be carried out that make it possible to know the characteristics of the participants and evaluate their own abilities, strengths and weaknesses.

## Aspects facilitate cohesion

Create individual stimulation methods that have to do with their group performance.

The foundations of good group cohesion are communication, participation and honesty.

Make constructive, non-destructive comments

Avoid commenting on one team member to another.

Do not make distinctions.

## Instrument 4.3

In group I analyze instrument 1 and 2 and complete the information that is presented.

Aspects that we have in common in instrument 1:

Positive aspects of the institution in relation to instrument 2:

Negative aspects of the institution in relation to instrument 2:

Possible steps to collaborate in the development of institutional cohesion:

## Session A5

Worksheets for subgroup: Assignment of roles

### Instrument 5.1

Individually:

Make a list of the skills you have:

Make a list of the skills you would like to acquire or refine:

### Instrument 5.2

#### **Role assignment**

The definition of roles in a work team requires a detailed knowledge of our collaborators, which must be based on both professional and human terms.

The more aware we are of the job opportunities of the members who accompany us in a project, as well as their personal skills, the greater the chances of success in the appointment of roles.

#### **Group roles**

Communicating leader: responsible for communication between the team as well as presenting to his team the information he collects from observing the development of activities.

Rapporteur: responsible for reporting the processes in written form. It is also responsible for collecting and systematizing the information to be delivered.

Time watch: controls the time schedule and is responsible for the team developing the different activities within the agreed time.

Dynamizer: who is concerned with verifying within the team that individual and group responsibilities are being assumed. It encourages the interest in the activity to be maintained

and, finally, permanently questions the group to create bridges between what has already been done and what is being done.

Utilero: responsible for obtaining the material and / or tools required to meet the goal according to the needs of the team for the development of activities and / or processes.

### Instrument 5.3

In group analyze instrument 1 and 2 and complete the information that is presented.

Aspects that we have in common in instrument 1:

There is a clear definition of the roles of each of the members of the institution: (yes, no, why?

Possible steps to collaborate in the development of roles in the institutional:

### Session B1

Worksheet: Communication

#### Communication

To promote collaborative work, strategies should be used that foster communication between the participants where they can give, receive and listen to the information given to each of the members.

Prepare the following questionnaire to analyze strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of communication within the institution. Try to detail each of the aspects by numbering the points from each of the areas of the school.

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats

## Session B2

Group Affirmation Activity: My Tree

### Goals

1. It favors self-knowledge and that of others.
2. Stimulate group affirmation.
3. It favors the positive evaluation of others.
4. It favors group communication.

### Materials

1. Green, brown, red and orange construction paper.
2. Rubber
3. Scissors
4. Legal size cardboard

### Development

1. Each participant makes a tree using brown construction paper for the trunk with roots, green for the leaves and red and orange for the fruits. These can be made with the figure of your own hand.



2. Once the tree is made, you must put in the roots the qualities and capacities that you think you have, in the branches you can put the positive things that you do and the fruits of your successes and triumphs.

3. In a discussion, each participant will present their tree and explain its characteristics.

4. At this time any member of the group will be able to get up and add, while he explains it, new roots, branches or fruits to his partner's tree.

### **Group reflection**

1. The activity coordinator leads the group to reflect by asking the following questions:
2. Did the information help to get to know each other better?
3. How did it feel to talk about yourself?
4. How did you feel when listening to others talking about you?

### **Session B3**

Individual proposal of desired objectives to improve attention to diversity.

Make a list of at least five things you think you should work on to improve attention to diversity.

Select three aspects from your list and formulate a collaborative work objective.

### Session B4

Template for preparing the action plan to improve attention to diversity.

General objective	Specific objectives	Actions	Schedule	Responsibles

### Session B5

General evaluation of the workshop

Thank you for participating in the Workshop "Collaboration: a step towards change"

Your collaboration is requested by filling out the following instrument.

By participating in the workshop:			
I learned that:	I think I should change:	I think I should strengthen:	I would suggest to the coordinator that:

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